

**Protocol:**  
A structure and guide for a group's conversation regarding a piece of student work.

## THE TUNING PROTOCOL: Got an hour? Here is an efficient way to examine student work

Examining student work has always been part of a teacher's job. But, in recent years, that practice has moved from being a solitary activity to being more collaborative work in which teachers learn about their practice by sharing with and listening to colleagues.

In the hierarchy of professional learning practices, examining student work would rank near the top because of the way that teachers work together to sharpen their practice to improve student learning.

**Background:** The Tuning Protocol was developed by the Coalition of Essential Schools to provide teachers with feedback on authentic assessments (exhibitions, portfolios, etc.). A teacher or team of teachers presents samples of student work and the context for the work. The presenter then offers a focusing question. After reviewing the work, participants offer feedback.

**Facilitation:** Can be facilitated by someone inside or outside the group.

**Time:** One hour.

### DIRECTIONS

<b>Presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenter shares the student work and sets the context by describing the teaching/learning situation. Presenter poses one or two key questions to be answered.</li> <li>As the presenter speaks, participants are quiet, taking notes.</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 15 minutes</i>
<b>Clarifying questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants ask non-evaluative questions about the presentation, such as "What happened before X? What did you do next?"</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 5 minutes</i>
<b>Individual writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants write individually about the presentation.</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 5 minutes</i>
<b>Participant discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenter turns to one side and listens silently during this time.</li> <li>Participants discuss among themselves, exploring issues raised during the presentation, striving to understand the situation, and raising possible answers to the questions.</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 15 minutes</i>
<b>Presenter reflection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenter talks about the participants' discussion.</li> <li>Participants are silent, taking notes as the presenter speaks.</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 15 minutes</i>
<b>Debriefing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presenter and participants discuss both the process and the content of the protocol.</li> </ul>	<i>Time: 10 minutes</i>

SOURCE: Lois Easton, editor, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (Oxford, OH: NSDC, 2004.)